

DAVID WERNER

John Wesley's Question: 'How is Your Doing?'

When Christians gather in small groups together, we usually greet one another with the colloquial "How are you doing?" This question can also be used to describe what happens thereafter. Many small groups that focus on personal sharing tend to focus on how the participants are doing inwardly, namely, by the sharing of their feelings, attitudes, struggles, insights, and—if real transparency exists—temptations and failings. Although these "soul-discussions" can be rich and productive, they don't necessarily propel their participants towards Christian maturity and growth.

John Wesley, keenly interested in such maturity and growth, seems to have had a fuller expectation for small group sharing. Not only did he want the Methodists under his care to be asking each other how they were doing (meaning their inner feelings, attitudes, struggles, etc.), he also wanted them to be asking each other another question, which perhaps we can phrase as, "How is your doing?" or, "How is it going with what you are doing?" Wesley believed that sharing how well you were living out your faith in actions pushed you to live a changed life.

Indeed for Wesley, *how* one was doing internally (in one's soul) was directly connected to *what* one did, or how one lived out the Christian life externally (in one's actions). "A tree," as the saying goes, "is known by its fruit." Wesley uses this analogy to explain that true religion "is, properly and strictly, a principle within, seated in the inmost soul, and thence manifesting itself by these outward fruits, on all suitable occasions."¹ In fact, it must. "But, wherever [true religion] is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation"²

Wesley saw this connection going both ways. Not only is the external life (the "doings") the best indication of the inner spiritual health (the "doing"), but carefully managing the outward Christian practices is also one of the best ways to grow spiritually. In his sermon "On Zeal," Wesley explains that by

outward works of mercy “we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real means of grace”³ A key Wesley’s insight was that spiritual growth is fostered not only by the disciplining of one’s personal piety, but also by the equally important disciplining of one’s behavior. The Methodist was to train what he or she *did*, in order to train what he or she *believed*.

It was this key insight that caused Wesley to structure Methodism the way he did. Inward faith could be affected and nurtured through outward action. Wesley, it seems, built his Methodist structure to manage not belief or even inward faith, but outward actions. The heart was quickened through hearing the word of God and experiencing God’s grace directly, but it was in the disciplined management of the outward actions that this fledgling faith grew and matured.

Yet holy living did not just serve the purpose of promoting inward faith. It was a proper end in itself. Wesley adamantly believed that spiritual growth is a growth both in inward and outward holiness,⁴ both “of heart and life.”⁵

A Prudential Means of Grace

It was the small group setting termed by Wesley as the “class meeting” (or “meeting in class”) that provided the primary context for the Methodists to grow in their inward and outward holiness. The class meeting, by Wesley’s design, was the main unit of Methodism; it was the work horse of the Methodist structure. Preaching and teaching were vital for describing the vision, but it was the class meeting that carried the Methodist there.

Class meetings did this by providing accountability: accountability to Wesley, to each other, and to Wesley’s standard of both works of piety and works of mercy. Thus the class meeting became Wesley’s method for behavioral change. Early on Wesley published *The General Rules* as specific guidelines for what this change in behavior looked like and how it was to be measured within the classes. This ensured that the class meetings were to focus not just on the members’ inner growth, but also on the outward life. So, the core unit of the Methodist structure, it can be argued, specifically included an outward accountability for outward practice.

Wesley called the class meeting a prudential means of grace.⁶ He understood that living out one’s faith in daily behavior is a means of grace. The way a person acts and lives is a way that person experiences God. It is also a measure of faith. It is a promoter of that faith. It is even part of the overall goal of holiness.

A New View of Class Meetings

Although Wesley is known for applying small groups effectively within Methodism, he by no means was the first to use them. Wesley himself acknowledges that the small group format was most likely the structure of

the early Church.⁷ What is Wesley's innovation for the classes, it can be argued, is that he designed them to have a balanced focus on both works of piety and works of mercy.

It is generally assumed, however, that Methodist class meetings had always been small groups of people coming together for piety; i.e. mutual support, accountability and spiritual encouragement. The earliest extant descriptions of Methodist class meetings, after all, do show a singular emphasis on works of piety.⁸

This fails to take into account, however, that the first Methodist class meetings were started well over sixty years before the appearances of these earliest surviving transcriptions. There is good reason to believe that the content of class meeting discussions changed over this length of time, especially considering the radical changes within Methodism, including Wesley's waning control and eventual death.⁹ It seems that it was not until the growth spurt of the early nineteenth century that class meeting transcriptions were finally published, perhaps to answer growing interest.¹⁰ By then, it can be argued, Wesley's original intention of a dual emphasis was reduced to an almost singular emphasis on works of piety.¹¹

A closer look at how class meetings arose, Wesley's description in *The General Rules*, and Wesley's theology itself all suggest that his original intention for the class meeting was in fact a dual emphasis on works of piety and mercy.

The Class Meeting

Methodist classes were about 12 people grouped according to where the members lived, with one of them being appointed as the leader.¹² Class membership therefore was very diverse, including a mixture of different sexes, marital statuses, ages, social standing and spiritual maturity. The leaders could be either men or women, although by the turn of the nineteenth century Joseph Nightingale indicates that leaders were usually men, except in classes of all women.¹³ The classes met together once per week, usually for about an hour, and usually in the homes of the leaders (although later classes also met in the local Methodist preaching houses). Class meetings were usually closed meetings since the members shared such personal information. Those who showed a desire to join a class, however, were usually allowed to observe two meetings before being granted a trial membership at the next quarterly meeting. Then, if they participated faithfully during the three month trial period, they were granted full membership status at the following quarterly meeting, officially becoming a "Methodist."

The format of the meeting was an individual recounting of personal religious experience. There was no preaching, Scripture reading, or teaching of doctrine. The class leader specifically inquired after the state of each member's

soul, and each member, in turn, gave an account of his or her religious experience since the last meeting. The leader was one of the members, a co-traveler in the Christian life, the first among equals. Thus the leader's inquiries were not interrogations, but rather expressions of concern by a caring friend. The atmosphere was intended to be one of trust, acceptance and commitment.

The Rise of the Class Meeting

Wesley claimed that the beginning of the class meeting was virtually by accident.¹⁴ It arose amid the chaos of trying to keep organized all the new members: "But when a large number of people was joined, the great difficulty was, to keep them together. For they were continually scattering hither and thither, and we knew no way to help it. But God provided for this also, when we thought not of it."¹⁵ "At length, while we were thinking of quite another thing, we struck upon a method for which we have cause to bless God ever since."¹⁶

Originally the idea of grouping Methodists into classes was for the pragmatic purpose of collecting pennies to pay off the debt on the New Room in Bristol.¹⁷ Wesley's organizational eye quickly discerned the greater application of accountability. As the leaders collected the pennies, they had weekly, personal contact with each of their members. They afforded Wesley and his preachers knowledge into the personal lives of the Methodists. As the movement grew this became increasingly important, as it became difficult for Wesley and his traveling preachers to provide direct accountability for each member under their care. The class meeting provided Wesley with "sub-pastors" in the class leaders.

Wesley also saw in the class meetings the critical role of providing a support network to keep those newly awakened from slipping back into their former way of life. Thousands of people were "awakened" under the preaching of the Wesleys and their traveling preachers. Wesley intentionally sought out a means to keep those who were stirred from slipping back into their former ways once he had moved on.

I am more and more convinced, that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened, and then left to themselves to fall asleep again. Therefore I determine, by the grace of God, not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow.¹⁸

The class meeting was the way Wesley followed the blow. He was "providentially led," he claimed, "to divide all the people into little companies, or classes"¹⁹ So effective was the class meeting that early on (by the mid-1740s) Wesley mandated that all Methodists had to be a member of a class—in fact, one became a Methodist by joining a class meeting.²⁰

The class structure was a great help to Wesley as he managed the Methodist movement. Yet its greatest benefit came to those who showed up for the class meeting, week after week. The class meeting provided a way for Methodists to “watch over one another in love,” as Wesley put it. The Methodists gathered together in classes to find support and comfort, to be encouraged in their spiritual journeys, to receive counsel and perspective, and to receive accountability for their Christian witness in the world. In the classes, the Methodists were able to bare their souls, share their recent spiritual experiences, and tell of their struggles and victories.

The benefit for the class members came from the class meeting’s mutual accountability not to their feelings but to their experience. As David Lowes Watson points out, the sharing at a class meeting was within a context of confidence and trust, in which each person gave an account of his or her “inward discernment and practical discipleship.”²¹

Ultimately it was because of this benefit to the individual class members that Wesley continued to insist on its use throughout Methodism.

It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to “bear one another’s burdens,” and naturally to “care for each other.” As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ 22

The General Rules

To explain why he excluded certain Methodists in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Wesley published *The Nature, Design, and General Rules Of the United Societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, &c.* on May 1, 1743. He explained that since people joined his societies by request, it was his authority to lay out the requirements. Wesley only had one requirement for admission: that the person desired “to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.”²³ Nevertheless, as Wesley quickly added, “But, wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits.”²⁴ A Methodist’s life, then, should evidence discernable outward “fruits” that determine if they were continuing their pursuit of holiness in earnest. Wesley continued, “It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation” and then outlined the three General Rules by which all Methodists are to live, getting very specific when explaining how the three rules apply to daily living.²⁵

The General Rules were Wesley's prescribed foundation for the class meeting. In fact, he mandated in the Annual Conference Minutes that each new person in a class be given a copy of *The General Rules*, instructing, "Give them the Rules the first time they meet. See that this be never neglected."²⁶

The three rules are all outward, observable behaviors. Since holiness for Wesley was inward and outward—was of heart and life—an individual's spiritual progress could be observed in that person's practical living. Thus the test Wesley would hold before the Methodists was a test of behavior, a test of outward living. Early on, it seems, as he was first adapting their role and function, Wesley intended the class meetings specifically to assist Methodists to live out *The General Rules*.

It was up to the class leaders to discern if the members of their classes were faithfully pursuing *The General Rules*. Wesley mandated that the class leader was to meet with the class members weekly "in order to inquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor" as well as meet with the minister and stewards of the society weekly in order to report "any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reproved..."²⁷

Wesley's criteria for inspection among the Methodists, notice, was not their earnestness of belief or solidness of faith, but rather their observable, outward lives. Henderson has discovered an article written by Wesley for the *Arminian Magazine*. He found it as reprinted in the November 30, 1825 edition of *Zion's Herald*, Boston. It is not included in any compilation of Wesley's works. In it Wesley expressly lays out his expectation that "the particular design of the classes is: to know who continue as members of the Society; to inspect their outward walking; to inquire into their inward state; to learn what are their trials; and how they fall by or conquer them; to instruct the ignorant in the principles of religion; if need be, to repeat, to explain, or enforce, what has been said in public preaching..."²⁸

It was critical, of course, that the leaders were intimately invested in each class member and were well regarded by them. The entire Methodist system, it could be argued, hung on the effectiveness of the class leaders. Leslie F. Church comments that the class meetings succeeded "because of the common sense and spiritual insight of the leader."²⁹

Every three months Wesley and his assistants also personally interviewed each Methodist, issuing class tickets to those that "grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."³⁰ His criteria, he explained, was "not concerning the heart, but the life."³¹

I visit, for instance, the class in the Close, of which Robert Peacock is Leader. I ask, "Does this and this person in your class live in drunkenness or any outward sin? Does he go to church, and use the other means of grace? Does he meet you as often as he has

opportunity?” And the general tenor of this, I do not say cannot be known, but cannot be hid without a miracle.³²

Wesley understood accountability in terms of how each Methodist lived. That is why *The General Rules* became the foundation of the class meeting; the *General Rules* are about behavior. It was in the class meetings guided by *The General Rules* that the Methodists were held accountable for both inward and outward holiness.

Wesley's answer to the question of how to foster spiritual growth among a body of believers was mutual accountability to obedience to the will of God. The main form of this accountability for early Methodism was the class meeting with its dual emphasis on both works of piety and works of mercy. When *The General Rules* appeared from Wesley's hand a year and a half after the Bristol meeting, the dual emphasis was codified into the very heart of the class meeting.

***“A Heart and Life All Devoted to God.”*³³**

Wesley's theological distinction between justification and sanctification also required a dual emphasis for the class meeting. Wesley believed that Methodism was nothing more or less than Christianity.³⁴ Yet Wesley was adamant that Christianity is not merely a set of beliefs or even an experience of conversion, although they are significant. He understood Christianity as a daily following of Christ, a continual relationship with God, a way of living. Wesley's practical theology of holiness required that the class meeting—the main unit of Methodist corporate life—pulse with an accountability to both works of piety and works of mercy.

***“The Scripture Way of Salvation”*³⁵**

Just as the Christian faith is a journey, so too, for Wesley, is salvation. Salvation begins in God's love for the world and for each individual sinner. Grace is when God breaks into human lives with God's love. It is by God's grace that human lives are touched and changed. Faith is the human response to God's grace that invites and welcomes God's transforming presence. Yet, as Wesley understood it, salvation is not merely a one time event. It is a continual, ongoing relationship. It is a journey from selfish misery toward living fully. It is a process.

It is a process because God has a plan for those whom God touches: to transform them into whom God wants them to be. God's plan for all people is holiness: to become holy as God is holy.³⁶ Yet people do not become holy the moment they give their lives to Christ. Holiness comes through sanctification, the process of grace whereby God transforms believers and makes them holy. This sanctifying process is what God does during the course of normal, daily Christian living.

Sanctification is not a human work, but a work that originates in God's love and is driven by the power of the Holy Spirit. God acts through grace. The believer responds by receiving God's transforming power in his or her life. God continues to act, and the believer must continue to respond: "God does not continue to act upon the soul unless the soul re-acts upon God. He will not continue to breathe into our soul unless our soul breathes toward him again." ³⁷

Salvation is the continual journey whereby God makes people holy. It is a process that includes both justification and sanctification. It was Wesley's clarification of the distinction between justification and sanctification that gave rise to the significance of the class meeting.

"Are works necessary to the continuance of faith? Without doubt."³⁸

Early in his life, Wesley understood the centrality of holiness. This was instilled within him by his parents, and at Oxford he strove to fulfill it to the best of his ability. Yet it was not until the Moravians demonstrated the assurance of knowing Christ personally and Wesley's own Aldersgate experience that he was able to get a clearer understanding of the right order of faith, works and holiness.

Justification is a forgiveness of sins and being restored to a right relationship with God. It is a gift of God's grace whereby the merit of what Christ achieved on the cross is applied to the believer, who receives it by faith. Yet justification, as Wesley came to understand it, is real and actual. During the experience of justification, God also works in the life of the believer the grace of regeneration. Through regeneration the believer is changed and made able to become holy. Therefore by regeneration the Christian begins a process through which God works *in* the person (namely sanctification, or being made just) what God has already done *for* the person (namely justification, or forgiveness). Justification is not only *declared* by God; it also is *implanted* by God. Therefore, actual righteousness is not possible until after God justifies and regenerates. As Wesley clarifies:

"But do not [I] believe *inherit* righteousness?" Yes, in its proper place; not as the *ground* of our acceptance with God, but as the *fruit* of it; not in the place of *imputed* righteousness, but as consequent of it. That is, I believe God *implants* righteousness in every one to whom he has *imputed* it. ³⁹

Sanctification is the journey started by regeneration. It is the process whereby God actually makes people righteous, just and holy. In the course of every day living, God works sanctifying grace in the lives of believers. They, in turn, respond through faithful obedience to God's will in every good work. Works, then, are a response to God's working. Thus they are not a part of justification, but a part of sanctification. Wesley was therefore able to affirm that works are

necessary for salvation, but only *contingently* so: “for these fruits are only necessary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them; otherwise a man may be sanctified without them.”⁴⁰

Wesley continues to use the image of a tree and branches to explain the relationship between faith and works, saying that “every branch of gospel obedience is both asserted and proved to be indispensably necessary to eternal salvation.”⁴¹ This obedience gives rise to the fruit, namely works:

The doctrines [Methodists] constantly teach are these: That religion does not consist in externals only, in attending the church and sacrament, (although all these things they approve and recommend,) in using all the means of grace, or in works of charity, (commonly so called,) superadded to works of piety; but that it is, properly and strictly, a principle within, seated in the inmost soul, and thence manifesting itself by these outward fruits, on all suitable occasions.⁴²

True Christian faith, for Wesley, must produce good works. Around the time of the formation of the class meetings, Wesley published that “Neither does faith shut out good works, necessarily to be done afterwards. But it should also be observed, what that faith is whereby we are justified. Now, that faith which brings not forth good works, is not a living faith, but a dead and devilish one.”⁴³ In fact, He even goes so far as to say, “O warn them that if they remain unrighteous, the righteousness of Christ will profit them nothing!”⁴⁴ His response was even stronger to some Methodists who were reluctant to help “feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to instruct the ignorant, to visit the sick and such as are in prison, bound in misery and iron. . .,” writing, “I tell them it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them. I tell them, the Methodists that do not fulfill all righteousness will have the hottest place in the lake of fire!”⁴⁵

It is only by God’s grace and power, then, that the good works required are able to be done: “We shall then see there is no opposition between these, ‘God works; therefore, do ye work;’ but, on the contrary, the closest connexion; and that in two respects. For, First, God works; therefore you can work: Secondly, God works, therefore you must work.”⁴⁶

Good works are a response to God’s grace received. This is the journey of sanctification. It is through the process of receiving God’s grace and responding in good works, throughout the course of normal daily living, that God makes Christians holy.

Salvation, for Wesley, encompassed both the experience of justification and process of sanctification. As he asserted, Methodists “maintain, with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand, and of entire sanctification both of heart and life, on the other;

being as tenacious of inward holiness as any Mystic, and of outward, as any Pharisee."⁴⁷

Sanctification became the hallmark of the Methodist movement. Those that were quickened through preaching found peace and assurance through a personal experience of Christ. Yet following this justification, the Christian needed a context in which to grow in that new faith and grow in the holiness that God desires. Methodism, particularly through the class meeting, provided the context for sanctification. It served as the soil from which the branches of obedience could bring forth the fruit of every good work.

***"The essence of it is holiness of heart and life."*⁴⁸**

Salvation, as the process that Wesley saw it to be, is intensely practical. It is the journey toward holiness, lived out in everyday life. The test of faith, then, is not what you know but how you live ("doings"). Wesley described what a Methodist looks like and what a Methodist does in "The Character of a Methodist." He concludes by saying,

And whosoever is what I preach, (let him be called what he will, for names change not the nature of things,) he is a Christian, not in name only, but in heart and in life. He is inwardly and outwardly conformed to the will of God, as revealed in the written word. He thinks, speaks, and lives, according to the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ. His soul is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and in all true holiness. And having the mind that was in Christ, he so walks as Christ also walked.⁴⁹

Wesley was fond of calling Christianity "practical divinity"⁵⁰ and "experimental religion."⁵¹ As practical divinity, the Christian faith in the heart produces in the life of the believer actual and true holiness. This holiness is not just in the inward life of the believer, but in the outward life as well.⁵² True Christianity is "the religion of the heart, faith working by love, producing all inward as well as outward holiness."⁵³ Wesley says holiness is to imitate Christ in all things:

By Methodists I mean, a people who profess to pursue (in whatsoever measure they have attained) holiness of heart and life, inward and outward conformity in all things to the revealed will of God; who place religion in an uniform resemblance of the great Object of it; in a steady imitation of Him they worship, in all his imitable perfections; more particularly, in justice, mercy, and truth, or universal love filling the heart, and governing the life."⁵⁴

Wesley is careful to articulate that holiness is universal love both filling the heart ("doing") and governing the life ("doings"). Again returning to the

image of branches that bear fruit, he comments how the mustard seed of faith produces both inward tempers and outward words and works: it is that “which is first sown in the heart as a grain of mustard seed, but afterwards putteth forth great branches, on which grow all the fruits of righteousness, every good temper, and word, and work.”⁵⁵ Holiness is in heart, mind and actions. Methodists insist, that nothing deserves the name of religion, but a virtuous heart, producing a virtuous life: A complication of justice, mercy, and truth, of every right and amiable temper, beaming forth from the deepest recesses of the mind, in a series of wise and generous actions.⁵⁶

Wesley understood holiness as the purpose of salvation: “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”⁵⁷ It was for the purpose of promoting holiness of both heart and life that Wesley implemented the class meeting. The members utilized ongoing mutual accountability as the context for sharing their experience of how they lived out their faith in their daily lives.

“I exhort you that fear God to abound in works both of piety and mercy.”⁵⁸

The core method of how the class meeting fostered a growth in holiness was by inviting each member to share from their personal religious experience regarding their pursuit of holiness. The class offered the context of mutual accountability to progress in holiness around two emphases: works of piety and works of mercy.

The distinction of good works into works of piety and works of mercy is not unique to Wesley. Indeed, it was an Anglican commonplace. Wesley even argued Christ differentiated between the two. While preaching on Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, Wesley explains good works:

Some of these are commonly termed works of piety; the rest, works of charity or mercy. Of the latter sort, [Jesus] particularly names almsgiving; of the former, prayer and fasting. But the directions given for these are equally to be applied to every work, whether of charity or mercy.⁵⁹

Wesley offers a fuller explanation:

“But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification?” First, all works of piety; such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet; receiving the supper of the Lord; searching the Scriptures, by hearing, reading, meditating; and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health allows. Secondly, all works of mercy; whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men; such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to

awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feeble-minded, to succour the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance, and these the “fruits meet for repentance,” which are necessary to full sanctification. This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation.⁶⁰

In his sermon, “On Zeal,” Wesley draws upon James Garden’s imagery of concentric circles to describe the Christian.⁶¹ At the very center of the soul is “love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival.”⁶² This love radiates out as holy “tempers” (such as “longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance,” etc.), which, in turn, give rise first to works of mercy and then to works of piety.⁶³

Interestingly, Garden did not include an emphasis on helping one’s neighbor and did not even mention works of mercy in his description. Wesley, however, not only added them to Garden’s model, but, by placing them closer to the central love than works of piety, gave them a preferred status:

Thus should he show his zeal for works of piety; but much more for works of mercy; seeing “God will have mercy and not sacrifice;” that is, rather than sacrifice. Whenever, therefore, one interferes with the other, works of mercy are to be preferred. Even reading, hearing, prayer, are to be omitted, or to be postponed, “at charity’s almighty call”; when we are called to relieve the distress of our neighbour, whether in body or soul.⁶⁴

In fact, not only is it by works of mercy that “we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them”⁶⁵ Thus Wesley asks the Methodists:

But are you more zealous for works of mercy, than even for works of piety? Do you follow the example of your Lord, and prefer mercy even before sacrifice? Do you use all diligence in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting them that are sick and in prison? And, above all, do you use every means in your power to save souls from death? If, as you have time, “you do good unto all men”⁶⁶

It is important to note that Wesley does not separate works of piety and works of mercy into inward or outward holiness. Works of piety, for example, that foster inward holiness (such as prayer, Bible reading, and controlling one’s anger), are placed in the same category as those that foster outward holiness (such as going to church, receiving the sacraments and not swearing). Likewise, works of mercy that foster inward holiness (such as praying for those in need), are categorized with those that foster outward holiness (such as providing food and clothing).⁶⁷ Wesley held that the love of God manifests itself in the life of the believer in holiness—both inward and outward, both in the heart and life.

Nevertheless, Wesley was always careful to reiterate that works of piety and mercy are totally impotent without the inward faith. In one of his earliest sermons Wesley established that works of piety and mercy gain no merit.⁶⁸ They are necessary for salvation, but only *after* true repentance: “Both repentance, rightly understood, and the practice of all good works, works of piety as well as works of mercy (now properly so called, since they spring from faith,) are, in some sense, necessary to sanctification.”⁶⁹

“As faith increases, holiness increases.”⁷⁰

Wesley’s key insight for the class meeting was that holy living is not only the desired result of faith, it is also a means whereby that faith grows. Works of piety and mercy, then, are not only ways that Christians live out their faith (being necessary fruits), they are also ways in which God works in their lives to bring about holiness. Both are means of grace: “But are [works of piety] the only means of grace? Are there no other means than these, whereby God is pleased, frequently, yea, ordinarily, to convey his grace to them that either love or fear him? Surely there are works of mercy, as well as works of piety, which are real means of grace.”⁷¹

In a letter to a certain Miss Furley, Wesley expresses approval that she is “waiting upon God” to bring about the fullness of holiness by engaging in works of piety and mercy, saying, “By resolutely persisting, according to your little strength, in all works of piety and mercy, you are waiting on God in the old scriptural way.”⁷² Then, to those who desire to recover their Christian passion, Wesley prescribes the path is through works of piety and mercy:

Beware of sins of omission; lose no opportunity of doing good in any kind. Be zealous of good works; willingly omit no work, either of piety or mercy. Do all the good you possibly can to the bodies and souls of men. Particularly, ‘thou shalt in anywise reprove thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.’ Be active. Give no place to indolence or sloth; give no occasion to say, ‘Ye are idle, ye are idle.’⁷³

Works of piety and mercy are not only the evidence of holiness, they also cultivate it.

Thus, “For Wesley, the locus of activity relevant to the gospel of Christ was the experience or behavior of a person.”⁷⁴ It was not knowledge: “In Wesley’s system, doing the will of God, even on the most rudimentary level, always precedes cognitive ‘knowing.’ True knowledge, for a Methodist, was the natural outgrowth of proper practice; not vice versa.”⁷⁵ Therefore Wesley structured the class meeting to focus on experience and behavior. This, in turn, was to foster holiness. Wesley often quoted the proverb from the early church, that “The soul and body make a man; the Spirit and discipline make a Christian.”⁷⁶

True and real change comes from practice. Practice comes from discipline. This is where the class meeting focused. As John Lawson says, "The Methodist is to start here, with the means of grace and moral discipline, in trust that the Spirit will bestow upon him a change of heart."⁷⁷ The class members encouraged each other in discipline by sharing how they were living:

Wesley believed that learning comes through experience. Methodism was an experiential system....The difference between the meetings of the Methodists and other religious groups of their day was that many church leaders were telling people what they *ought* to do, but the Methodists were telling each other what they *were* doing.⁷⁸

The love of God in the heart of the believer necessarily brought forth the fruit of holiness. The class meeting was the ordinary, ongoing way that Methodism fostered that holiness of heart and life. Thus the original focus of the class meeting was to bring about change in the behavior of each member. Mutual accountability to works of piety and mercy was the way early Methodists encouraged each other to engage in the means of grace that brought about the change in behavior.

***"The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness."*⁷⁹**

Wesley stated that the very purpose of Methodism was to "spread scriptural holiness throughout the land."⁸⁰ He urged all Methodists to make this their single objective.⁸¹ They could not keep their faith private and inward. It had to be seen. Inward and outward holiness could be not only personal but also had to be social. The class meetings compelled Methodists to make their faith seen in tangible ways.

The social application of holiness was driven by the Methodists' pursuit of personal holiness. Wesley firmly believed that true Christian faith is lived out in the context of interacting with other people: "Christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it."⁸² So for Wesley, the pursuit of holiness drives Christians to intersect the lives of others around them.

Yet social holiness was also driven by Wesley's understanding of God's love for all people. For Wesley and the Methodists, God's free grace was universal for all; each person was precious to God.⁸³ It was God's love for all people that compels those who already know of God's love to reach out to others who do not.

To ensure every Methodist understood this, Wesley published in the front of each hymn book that "The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection."⁸⁴

Holiness is a matter of love. It is out of this love for others that Methodists were compelled to engage in works of mercy for their neighbors. Wesley explained,

It must also be allowed, that as the love of God naturally leads to works of piety, so the love of our neighbour naturally leads all that feel it to works of mercy. It inclines us to feed the hungry; to clothe the naked; to visit them that are sick or in prison; to be as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; an husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless.⁸⁵

The concern for the neighbor, therefore, was both physical and spiritual. In defining a Methodist, Wesley specifically drew attention to both concerns:

As he has time, he “does good unto all men;” unto neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies: And that in every possible kind; not only to their bodies, by ‘feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick or in prison,’ but much more does he labour to do good to their souls, as of the ability which God giveth and to provoke those who have peace with God to abound more in love and in good works⁸⁶

Wesley made a point to steer the Methodists away from the tendency to only focus on the spiritual needs of others. For example, he preached that a peacemaker “doeth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of all men.”⁸⁷ Or again:

[Jesus] warns us, that the performing our duty to God will not excuse us from our duty to our neighbour; that works of piety, as they are called, will be so far from commending us to God, if we are wanting in charity, that, on the contrary, that want of charity will make all those works an abomination to the Lord.⁸⁸

The Methodist, says Cameron, “was concerned to save not only souls, but bodies also; that is, to save men, not only for the next world, but for this one as well.”⁸⁹ This social focus on the spiritual and physical needs of others was therefore an essential part of the class meeting experience. Lyddon identifies that the

value to the class meeting was the apparent successful blending of social witness and personal piety. In the class, the members were concerned with their own spiritual progress, but this concern soon manifested itself in concern for others as the class member sought to work out the norm of love of God and love for fellow human beings.⁹⁰

Hymns sung at the class meetings often expressed the values of the class. One of Charles Wesley’s hymns often sung at class meetings shows this importance of helping others:

Help us to help each other,
 Lord, Each other's cross to bear.
 Let each his friendly aid afford,
 And feel his brother's care.⁹¹

Or again:

O let us stir each other up,
 Our faith by works to approve,
 By holy, purifying hope,
 And the sweet task of love.⁹²

Wesley's social emphasis, both in terms of maintaining God's love for all people as well as Christians' love for their neighbors, kept Methodists concerned about other people. In class meetings, the Methodists spoke about how they had helped other people, both in word and deed. Lyddon argues:

The Methodist Revival which manifested itself in such structural forms as the class meeting was not only a vehicle for personal piety but also of social concern. The Revival clearly combined these two widely divergent contemporary expressions of religious life under a single religious experience.⁹³

This fostered in Methodism a unique emphasis on both the spiritual and physical well-being of other people.

“Do all the good you can....”⁹⁴

It happened. Methodists, by the thousands, left their class meetings and went out doing good to their neighbors, both to their souls and to their bodies. Wesley led them, not only by his words, but also by his own “doings.”

Stories abound of Wesley's personal philanthropy. Wesley also got directly and personally involved. His mode of bringing relief as a response to a discerned need was adopted throughout Methodism. The benevolent works of the early Methodists are practically numberless.

The class meetings, however, is where much of this relief was fostered. After the loan on the Bristol New Room was paid off, the classes continued to collect a penny from each person each week. This “class money” was then designated for the poor of the area.⁹⁵ Class leaders were to ask the class “if they save any thing for the needy? If they do any thing for the poor? If they visit the sick when it is proper to do it? and so on.”⁹⁶

It was through the class meetings that the Methodists also helped the many poor among the Methodists themselves. Collins explains “class meetings, for example, raised money, gathered foodstuffs, fuel, clothing, and medicine, and distributed them among the Methodist indigent.”⁹⁷ The members were to care for one another, in class and out. The class leader was also to visit any who were sick and provide whatever relief was needed.

By implementing his method of mobilizing thousands of individual Methodists to reach out to those around them in need, Wesley was able to orchestrate a system that did bring tremendous aid to countless people. To the Methodists, the poor and needy were not a mass, or merely each a number. Each was a neighbor. Further, through the constant invitation to the poor and needy to join “in class,” the Methodist structure offered the context for individuals to change the behaviors that limited their ability to progress. The class meeting, for example, taught basic success skills, such as faithfulness; seriousness; industriousness; cleanliness; abstinence of snuff, tobacco, liquid drams; avoiding familiarity with women; mending of clothing; and the like.⁹⁸ It provided accountability to change those habits that can lead to poverty, such as drinking, gambling and careless living.⁹⁹ The class meeting also gave the poor a voice and opportunities for leadership. Wesley changed social evil by changing the individuals within it.¹⁰⁰

Methodism worked almost too well! During Wesley’s lifetime, Methodism, which drew mainly from the lower classes, raised thousands from the lower classes into what became the new middle class. In fact, later in his life Wesley found himself preaching to Methodists on the new topics of money, luxury and wealth!

Although the class meeting’s primary goal was faithful discipleship, Watson reflects, it carried the effect of social change.¹⁰¹ It was the class meeting, with its dual emphasis not only on works of piety but also on works of mercy, that enabled such changes. Class meetings were the “place where the dual concerns of personal spirituality and social welfare were practiced.”¹⁰²

“Let the light which is in your heart shine in all good works, both works of piety and works of mercy.”¹⁰³

In his sermon “Self-Denial,” Wesley describes that neglecting works of piety and mercy can cause a Christian to stall spiritually:

He is not “going on to perfection”; he is not, as once, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, panting after the whole image and full enjoyment of God, as the heart after the water-brook. Rather he is weary and faint in his mind, and, as it were, hovering between life and death. And why is he thus, but because he hath forgotten the word of God, “By works is faith made perfect”? He does not use all diligence in working the works of God. He omits one or more, if not all, works of mercy and piety. Therefore, his faith is not made perfect, neither can he grow in grace ¹⁰⁴

Wesley held that works of piety and mercy are a means toward the goal of holiness that God desires of each person. Works are the natural and necessary result of experiencing God’s justifying and regenerating grace in the believer’s

own life. The journey of sanctification is an ongoing process whereby the Christian experiences God's sanctifying grace and continues to respond through good works. Wesley also knew from personal experience that the best encouragement for faithfulness in doing works comes from mutual accountability. Thus early on Wesley organized the Methodists into small groups. The class meeting was the solution Wesley was seeking. It offered mutual accountability and pastoral oversight. It enabled the Methodists to encourage each other to pursue holiness. As Wesley observed regarding the beginning of Methodism, "Thus, without any previous plan or design, began the Methodist society in England, a company of people associating together, to help each other to work out their own salvation."¹⁰⁵

Wesley drafted the "General Rules" as the foundation for the class meeting, expressing his desire that the class meeting be the context for holding the Methodists accountable to both works of piety and works of mercy. The only requirement to become a Methodist was a desire to save one's soul. Yet that salvation, stipulated Wesley, must be evidenced by the fruit of good works. Wesley was very specific in listing out examples of the different kinds of works in *The General Rules*. Some were works of piety, others were works of mercy. Both were included; both were crucial.

Wesley's intention for the class meeting, it seems, was a context for the evaluation of Christian conduct and life.¹⁰⁶ The standard for evaluation was *The General Rules*, with their expressed dual emphasis on both works of piety and works of mercy. The desired outcome of all this evaluating was a nurturing of each of the individual members in holiness.

Wesley's theological differentiation between justification and sanctification, and that salvation is a process, requires a growth of holiness in both works of piety and mercy. Salvation is a journey toward holiness in which the person continually experiences God's forgiving and transforming grace and then necessarily responds in the form of good works. The holiness that God desires in each person is both holiness of heart and life as well as personal and social. Thus good works are necessary for continuing on this journey to holiness, both as a response to God's grace as well as a means toward holiness. The class meeting was the regular way the Methodists were held accountable in their pursuit of holiness.

Wesley held that this growth and change came through the experience of God's grace, honed and tested through a mutual accountability to obedience through works. It was through a dual emphasis on both works of piety and works of mercy that the class meetings served as the place where this testing occurred on a regular, ongoing basis. The class meeting was where the Methodists were held accountable to pursue holiness through both works of piety and mercy.

It can be argued, then, that Wesley did indeed originally intended the class meeting to have a dual emphasis on works of piety and works of mercy. The dual emphasis was the catalysts for the members to pursue inward and outward holiness, holiness of heart and life.

“The continuance in works of mercy is necessary to salvation.”¹⁰⁷

The proper dual emphasis on both works of piety and works of mercy, however, is difficult to maintain. It is a place of great tension. The tendency is to slip toward one side or the other. In small groups talking about the members’ personal religious experience, the natural tendency is to slip to a greater focus on works of piety.

The class meeting of Methodism is no different. Despite Wesley’s original intention, as well as his mandates that the leaders make continual inspection into the behavior of each member, the class meeting did not maintain the dual emphasis. By the turn of the nineteenth century, most class meetings focused on works of piety alone. Certainly this was unfaithful to Wesley’s desire for the class meeting, as it was contrary to his whole understanding of salvation and Christian living.

It is interesting to note that the focusing on piety coincided with the class meetings’ loss of vitality and popularity. It is not unrealistic to surmise that as the class meeting lost the potency that came from its dual emphasis, its usefulness also diminished. Another reason may be that the class meeting was replaced by the more appealing prayer meeting¹⁰⁸ and, on the American frontier, the camp meeting. The true death of the class meeting, however, may have come when Methodism was codified into a church. Wesley had no problem denying tickets to those whom he felt were not pursuing holiness in earnest. Such purging is not possible within a church.

“For Such a Time as This”¹⁰⁹

Ironically, the decline of the class meeting seems to coincide with a massive growth of Methodism. Perhaps this suggests that the class meeting was useful only for a certain time.

Perhaps, too, it might be that this “certain time” is not so unlike now. The established church has been in a long state of decline. It struggles to reach great masses of people. Within churches Christians struggle to grow spiritually and struggle for spiritual transformation.

Perhaps it is time again to take a closer at the original class meeting as Wesley intended. It could be that its unique combination of emphasis on both works of piety and mercy may speak to our time.

Perhaps it is time to ask in our small group settings not only “You are you doing?” but also, “How is your doing?”

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Footnotes

¹ John Wesley, “A Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland Occasioned by some late Occurances,” in *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, vol. 9 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976–) 283. Hereafter, *Works*.

² *Ibid.*, 9:69.

³ Wesley, Sermon 92, “On Zeal,” in *Sermons III*, vol. 3 in *Works*, 313-314.

⁴ A favorite idea of Wesley’s. For examples, see *Works*, 1:568, 2:493, 9:129, 9:370, 9:437, etc.

⁵ A favorite saying of Wesley’s. For example, see *Works*, 3:506, 8:529, etc.

⁶ John Wesley, “Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others; from the year 1744, to the Year 1789,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3d ed., 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991; original edition London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872), 8:323. Hereafter *Works* (Jackson).

⁷ Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” in *Works* 9:258.

⁸This is certainly the case in Joseph Nightingale, *A Portraiture of Methodism: Being an Impartial View of the Rise, Progress, Doctrines, Discipline, and Manners of the Wesleyan Methodists*. In a Series of Letters, Addressed to a Lady (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1807); Jonathan Crowther, *A True and Complete Portraiture of Methodism: or, The History of the Wesleyan Methodists; including Their rise, progress, and present state* (London: Richard Edwards, 1811); and Thomas Jackson, *The Centenary of Methodism. A Brief Sketch of the Rise, Progress, & Present State of the Wesleyan-Methodist Societies Throughout the World* (London: John Mason, 1839).

⁹John Wesley died in 1791. The earliest transcription of a class meeting, to my knowledge, is in Nightingale, published in 1807

¹⁰This is the case with Nightingale; Crowther; Thomas Martin, *Thoughts on the Nature and Advantages of Class-Meeting, (As adopted in the Methodist Societies;) Including an Account of the Origin, Authority, and General Oeconomy of that Institution: Intended to Explain and Recommend It, to Whomsoever It May Concern* (London: Conference Office 1813); and *A Description of Class Meetings in an Epistle from A Young Lady of the Methodist Connexion, to a Female Acquaintance* (Whitby: Clark and Medd, 1818), reprinted as Appendix L in Watson, David Lowes. *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance*. (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985) 230-239.

¹¹Watson, for example, indicates that by the turn of the nineteenth century, the emphasis on inward piety eclipsed any emphasis on outward works of mercy. Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 145-146.

¹²Wesley, "Nature, Design, and General Rules," in *Works* 9:69-70.

¹³Nightingale, *Portraiture*, 181.

¹⁴Wesley, "On God's Vineyard," in *Works* 3:509.

¹⁵Wesley, "Thoughts upon Methodism," in *Works* 9:528.

¹⁶Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist," in *Works* 9:259.

¹⁷For a detailed description, see "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist" in *Works* 9:259 and "Thoughts upon Methodism" in *Works* 9:528.

¹⁸Wesley, March 13, 1743, *Journals and Diaries II* (1738-1743), vol. 19 in *Works*, 318.

¹⁹Wesley, Sermon 107 "On God's Vineyard," in *Works*, 3:509.

²⁰Richard E. Lyddon, Jr., "The Relevance for the Contemporary Church of the Eighteenth-Century British Methodist Class Meeting" (D.Min. diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1978) 13.

²¹Watson, *Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 116.

²²Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," in *Works* 9:262.

²³Wesley, "Nature, Design, and General Rules," in *Works* 9:69.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 9:69.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 9:69-73.

²⁶Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations," in *Works* (Jackson) 8:307

²⁷Wesley, "Nature, Design, and General Rules," in *Works* 9:70.

²⁸Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 109-111. [Article in *Zion's Herald*

(Boston: Nov. 30, 1825), III, page 1. It was designated as a reprint from an earlier issue of the *Arminian Magazine*.]

²⁹ Church, Leslie F. *The Early Methodist People* London: The Epworth Press. 1948. 159.

³⁰ Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists," in *Works* 9:265-266.

³¹ Wesley, March 9-12, 1747, *Journals and Diaries III* (1743-1754), vol. 20 in *Works*, 162-163.

³² *Ibid.*, 20:163.

³³ Wesley, June 27, 1769, *Journals and Diaries V* (1765-1775), vol. 22 in *Works*, 191.

³⁴ Wesley, July 2, 1786, *Journals and Diaries VI* (1776-1786), vol. 23 in *Works*, 404.

³⁵ Wesley, Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Sermons II*, vol. 2 in *Works*, 155.

³⁶ This is, for example, a main theme of Wesley's 13 sermons on is called Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." A good example can be found in Wesley, Sermon 23, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse the Third," in *Sermons I*, vol. 1 in *Works*, 530.

³⁷ Wesley, Sermon 19, "The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God," in *Works*, 1:442.

³⁸ Wesley, "Minutes of Some Late Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others," in *Works* (Jackson) 8:277-278.

³⁹ Wesley, Sermon 20, "The Lord Our Righteousness," in *Works*, 1:458.

⁴⁰ Wesley, Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Works* 2:167.

⁴¹ Wesley, "A Letter to The Reverend Mr. Downes, Rector of St. Michael's, Wood-street: Occasioned by His Late Tract, Entitled, 'Methodism Examined and Exposed,'" in *Works* (Jackson) 9:102.

⁴² Wesley, "A Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland Occasioned by some late Occurances," in *Works* 9:283.

⁴³ Wesley. "The Principles of a Methodist," in *Works* 9:51-2.

⁴⁴ Wesley, "The Lord Our Righteousness," in *Works* 1:458.

⁴⁵ Wesley, "Journal entry for Nov. 20, 1767," in *Wesley* (Jackson) 3:304-5.

⁴⁶ Wesley, Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," in *Works* 3:206.

⁴⁷ Wesley, "On God's Vineyard," in *Works* 3:507

⁴⁸ Wesley, "Thoughts upon Methodism," in *Works* 9:529.

⁴⁹ Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," in *Works* 9:41.

⁵⁰ Wesley, November 19, 1751, in *Works* 20:407, for example.

⁵¹ Wesley, September 2, 1767, in *Works*

22:101, for example.

⁵² Wesley, "A Short History of Methodism," in *Works* 9:369

- ⁵³ Wesley, "A Short History of the People Called Methodists," in Works 9:438.
- ⁵⁴ Wesley, "Advice to the People Called Methodists," in Works 9:123-124.
- ⁵⁵ Wesley, Sermon 33, "Sermon Mount, Discourse XIII," in Works 1:690.
- ⁵⁶ Wesley, "A Short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland," in Works 9:283.
- ⁵⁷ Wesley, Sermon 63, "The General Spread of the Gospel," in Works 2:489.
- ⁵⁸ Wesley, Sermon 106, "On Faith, Hebrews 11:6," in Works 3:500.
- ⁵⁹ Wesley, Sermon 26, "Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse VI," in Works 1:573.
- ⁶⁰ Wesley, "Scripture Way of Salvation," in Works 2:166.
- ⁶¹ Wesley first read James Garden's *Discurs academicus de Theologia Comparativa* (London, 1699) in 1733 while a fellow at Lincoln College.
- ⁶² Wesley, Sermon 92, "On Zeal," in Works 3:313-314.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3:313.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:314.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:313.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:319.
- ⁶⁷ In order to take into consideration the modern perspective of social justice, Watson suggests in his *Covenant Discipleship* curriculum to add a further dimension to Wesley's General Rules, categorizing works of piety and works of mercy each into both social and private. Christopher P. Momany, "Wesley's Class Meeting as a Model for Contemporary Integration of Christian Nurture and Christian Action" (D.Min. diss., Drew University Theological School, 1992) 61.
- ⁶⁸ Wesley, Sermon 17, "Circumcision of the Heart," in Works 1:406.
- ⁶⁹ Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in Works 2:164.
- ⁷⁰ Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations," in Works (Jackson) 8:279.
- ⁷¹ Wesley, Sermon 98, "On Visiting the Sick," in Works 3:385.
- ⁷² Wesley, "Letter To Miss Furlly, afterwards Mrs. Downes, December 22, 1756," in Works (Jackson) 12:196.
- ⁷³ Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in Works (Jackson) 11:432.
- ⁷⁴ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 104.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.
- ⁷⁶ For example, see Sermon 122 "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity" *Sermons IV*, vol. 4 in Works, 90; August 17, 1750, in Works 20:357; etc.
- ⁷⁷ John Lawson, "Our Discipline," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*. ed. Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965) 1:192.
- ⁷⁸ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 131.
- ⁷⁹ Wesley, "Hymns and Sacred Poems. Published by John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford; and Charles Wesley, M.A., Student of Christ Church, Oxford," in Works (Jackson) 14:321.
- ⁸⁰ Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations," in Works (Jackson) 8:299.

⁸¹ Rupert E. Davies, "Introduction," in *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, vol. 9 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) 24.

⁸² Wesley, Sermon 24, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV," Works 1:533.

⁸³ Leslie F. Church, *The Early Methodist People* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948) 1.

⁸⁴ Wesley, "Hymns and Sacred Poems. Published by John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford; and Charles Wesley, M.A., Student of Christ Church, Oxford," in Works (Jackson) 14:321.

⁸⁵ Wesley, Sermon 84, "The Important Question," in Works 3:191.

⁸⁶ Wesley, "The Character of a Methodist," in Works 9:41.

⁸⁷ Wesley, Sermon 23, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse III," in Works 1:518.

⁸⁸ Wesley, Sermon 22, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse II," in Works 1:493.

⁸⁹ Richard M. Cameron, *The Rise of Methodism: A Source Book* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954) 26.

⁹⁰ Lyddon, *Relevance*, 71.

⁹¹ Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Epworth Press, 1945) 229.

⁹² Church, *The Early Methodist People*, 169

⁹³ Lyddon, *Relevance*, 66.

⁹⁴ Attributed to Wesley. Source unknown.

⁹⁵ Wesley, May 7, 1741, in Works 19:193.

⁹⁶ L. Rosser, *Class Meetings: Embracing Their Origin, Nature, Obligation, and Benefits. Also, the Duties of Preachers and Leaders, and an Appeal to Private Members: And Their Temporal Advantages*, 3d ed. (Richmond: L. Rosser, 1855), 266.

⁹⁷ Kenneth J. Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999) 121.

⁹⁸ Thompson, *John Wesley*, 28-30.

⁹⁹ North, *Philanthropy*, 35.

¹⁰⁰ Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meeting*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 143.

¹⁰² Lyddon, *Relevance*, v.

¹⁰³ Wesley, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV," in Works 1:548.

¹⁰⁴ Wesley, Sermon 48, "Self-Denial" in Works 2:247-248.

¹⁰⁵ Wesley, "On Laying the foundation of the New Chapel," in Works 3:584.

¹⁰⁶ Wesley, March 25, 1742, in Works 19:258.

¹⁰⁷ Wesley, "On Visiting the Sick," in Works 3:385.

¹⁰⁸ Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting*, 137

¹⁰⁹ Esther 4:14. NIV.